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3. From ta (to do, in the ancient language) and si (to act). The Bambara freely translate tasi as "spirit of nothing" and give this stage, originating in nothingness and preceding creation, the name of tasi dyɛ̃, "world of the spirit of nothing."

called oryo or oyo, is broken down into three stages: yo, the inner word, invisible spirit and inaudible voice, potentially containing all creation: o the transition from the inaudible to the audible; [801] yereyereli, the creative vibration (4). The progression is represented

4. The name oyo, given to this system, is a composite of o and yo, and when pronounced reverses the chronological order. This anomaly is recognized by the Bambara who explain it by the fact that yo, designating an inaudible voice, cannot be pronounced before o which designates a perceptible noise. Thus, in reversing the chronological order, yo "remains in the secret of o" which is in accord with its nature.

by seven signs, 7 being the symbolic number of man (homo) "seed of the world." Indeed, this numeral is the sum of 3 (male symbol) and 4 (female symbol). The couple they form is itself the symbol of duality, the fundamental law of creation, since each human being is both male and female in body and spirit (5).

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5. The number 3 represents the penis and two testicles of the male body; the number 4 the four labia of the female body. On the other hand, man and woman are each endowed with two twin souls of different sexes; the soul of sex, opposite to that of its bearer, has its seat in the foreskin or the clitoris until the operation of circumcision or excision is performed. For further discussion of the duality of man and his

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person, see G. Dieterlen, La Personne chez les Bambara /The individual among the Bambara/ and infra, Ch. 3, The Person.

772 It is said that yo, the inner secret voice, "is born of itself, is known by itself, and comes out from itself /6/, out of the nothing which is itself" (1). Out of yo there will come only things that are themselves

1. yo na na a yere la, bwora a yere la, dona a yere la, a be fu la min ya yere ye.

and that will be nothing other than yo. Each thing, being yo, proceeds like yo, only from itself. Hence, man is nothing other than himself, since he is a creation of yo and since yo's creations are by itself. Thus, there is nothing in the world besides oneself, since the person is yo, and yo is entirely contained in the person. As a result, each being is directly descended from yo with no intermediary; it is yo and exists only because it wills it. That is to say, man, the image of yo, alone has the will, alone has the capacity to bring forth action or creation, since these can be nothing but himself. "Who then," say the initiates, " can know himself, make himself known and manifest himself, other than through himself? Who then can manifest anything but himself?"

But yo, being at the origin of the inaudible and invisible things that are itself, is also in the unknown, hence in nothingness. And consequently, the same is true of man who is nothingness and can act only on the nothingness of himself.

Thus, yo, insofar as it was mind, was free in its ability to decide and to use its creative will. Its work, in nothingness, consisted in shedding, "for it was the continuous shedding of the world." When it
772 manifested itself by rotating on itself, it went five times to the four
801 "angles of its thought," seleke miri, once to the "sky of its thought," ſã miri, once to the "earth of its thought," dugukolo miri, thus communicating its power to them (2). The realization of this universe,

2. On the meaning of the number 5, see p. 25. Yo has endowed the "angles," corresponding to the "cardinal angles" in the completed universe, with its greatest

776 773 At death, he takes back the spiritual principles of the diseased and preserves them in water so as to reintegrate them into another body, thus using forces which are eternally reusable. The product of the "shedding" (mana or folo) of souls which remain on the altars is for him in a way of constantly verifying the account of those living and dead who are entrusted to him.

On earth, men are indebted to him for all they possess. He gave them language, an expression of thought, and taught them its usage, having warned them against the misuse and evil use of words.

The techniques of survival, another expression of "Faro's words," so necessary to their lives since they have to provide the means for their existence, were revealed to them by the spirit. He helped them with his sovereign power, either by directly providing them with new tools, or by inspiring some of them to develop new techniques by putting to use observed facts. In this way, he gave the Bozo fishing nets which enabled them to catch the first recorded animal food, the fish; likewise, he encouraged among the Bambara the discovery of weaving through observing the spider's web.

He also gave men certain seeds which became the origin of farming, such as cotton and fonio, both of them being known before millet and the other cereals.

As proprietor of cowrie shells and metals, he is the master of wealth, distributing it as he pleases. Thus, one who owns precious [783] metal is responsible to Faro for it and owes him a part of one's earnings. For this reason many offerings are made by throwing gold or copper into the river.

776 241 Faro's deed is essential where the Bambara's main activity, agricultural work, is concerned. Every man with dignity and nobility must cultivate the earth in order to honor Faro. Each stroke of the hoe is a wound inflicted upon the earth and a punishment for its impurity. Each stroke of the hoe humiliates Mousso Koroni and purifies the earth. Faro watches over the soul and the vital force of the seeds. Only he can provide rain necessary to germination, for rain contains the soul, (ni) of the cereal grains as does the water of ponds and streams which one collects in case of drought.

776 774 241 Millet receives its soul as soon as it gets the humidity of the earth, and from that time on, it accompanies the various stages of germination with utterances which, at the beginning of the world, could be heard. As soon as /54/ it has received the rain, the seed splits and says: "My place is assigned." Then the sprout comes out of the earth

776 with the words: "May I be protected." Finally the growth of the stem
774 is accompanied by a third utterance: "May I be obeyed" (1). It pre-
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1. These are the three formula:
ndyora, nga kolosi, nga bunye.

serves its soul until full maturity, that is, the moment is is harvested. When the harvester's blade cuts the spike or the cluster, the plant sends its soul into Faro's realm with these words: "Iron is forbidden my grain; soul, go away to the house of water" (2). Thus deprived

2. Neke ye nkise tne ye, ni, ta dyi so la.

of its soul, the millet becomes suitable for eating and it says: "If I were not dead, I could not be eaten; my breed cannot be lost: whether or not I am eaten, nothing can reduce me for my soul is in water" (3).

3. Ni ná sale te nti dũ, n ŝia tise ka tunu,
ndunaw ma dũn wo, fẽ te bwona, ni be dyi la.

776 Many agrarian rituals are celebrated in order to assure Faro's pro-
241 tection. The high quality of the first fruits of the harvest offered to him indicates the importance of his role. It is in fact a payment made to him for the past harvest and in anticipation of the harvest to come.

776 He is also the guardian of the artisan's skill. The first object forged by the young blacksmith and the first spindle of thread woven by the young weaver are brought to him. Through this gesture, the individual entrusts him with both his work and his manual dexterity. After Faro has seen the work, he does not let the worker forget what he has learned and will help him perfect his skill.

Faro is a judge. Those who break the rules he has made are the object of his righteous wrath: those who are drowned or struck by lightning are always persons who have broken a taboo. Men submit most difficult cases to him as a last resort. Through the intermediary of the agents of different rituals such as the intermediary of the diviners, he answers requests and "settles the words." Most prayers
776 are addressed to him and in many cases the invocations end with his
782 name. He is omnipresent, invoked everywhere, and the seat of his power, as of all others, is the seventh heaven, to which the Bambara

761 776 842 After the marital couple has absorbed the fruit, a smooth-bodied embryo with nonarticulated limbs is formed in the maternal womb. /58/ It is at this moment that the couple consummate the sexual act in the course of which the woman "takes into herself the entire body of her husband": the upper part through the eyes, the lower part through the genital organs. The masculine seed located in the seven principal articulations (knees, elbows, ankles, and spine) transmits them to the embryo. The body, originally similar to the body of the spirit, thus becomes that of a human being.

The spirit restows the spiritual forces after the man has mated for the second time with his wife. If the woman bears a single child it means that the man, in the course of the second union, formed the double of the first germ, but was not permitted to procreate twins.

761 776 843 774 Faro disposes of the child's life and nature. He decides all that the child will be and will do, and determines his destiny from the moment the seed is placed by him in the womb. The foetus then develops with no further modifications until parturition, at which time it receives the spiritual principles, the soul, ni, and the double, dya, which will be his throughout his life. It is at this time that the inner relations of the individual to the social group to which he belongs intervene. Although Faro gives each child a new body, he animates this body with spiritual forces drawn from the family reservoir. The [775] newborn child is the direct heir to the ni and the dya of a deceased member of the family, actually of the one, whatever one's sex, who died shortly before the birth of the child (1).

1. The reincarnation of the deceased's spiritual principles, however, is not an absolute rule. Faro is the master of an infinite reserve of souls. Twins, albinos, and certain other children are born with the ni and dya as yet undetermined. They originate respectively in the second sky (kaba dye) and in water (dyi sumale). Further study on this particular point is necessary to complete this investigation.

761 776 774 775 The consequence of death was, in effect, to separate the corpse from the forces that animated it. The ni, by appropriate ritual, had been preserved on the altar of the ancestors (2), and the dya had left

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2. Grouped hierarchally, children, male adults, and women form religious societies or institutions, dyo. Each dyo is charged with the upkeep of altars which serve to preserve the spiritual forces of the group. (See p.

the dying man to go into the water and place itself under Faro's protection. At the moment of delivery, both ni and dya return to the body of the newborn child who replaces the dead man, but they return in reversed order: the dya is returned to the body of the child and becomes his ni; the ni of the deceased mixes with the birth water spread on the ground which forms the shadow (suma) and will be his double, the twin (1). In the case of a boy, the dya will be female; in the

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1. The blood of childbirth represents the excess tomato juice absorbed by the woman, that which remains in the womb after the formation of the embryo. On the eighth day after birth, the mother of the parturient woman squeezes three or four tomatoes (depending on the sex of the newborn) into a gourd which she then gives to the child's father. The latter makes his wife drink the juice to replace the blood which she has lost and which is considered impure.

case /59/ of a girl, it will be male. These movements are independent of the sex of the deceased as the spirit reverses the sexes when necessary. Each human being is thus both male and female
[838] through his soul and his double. This conception of human nature, which is fundamental to the Bambara, is expressed in the symbolism
[801] of numbers. The number seven is formed of three (male sexual symbol) and four (female sexual symbol) and represents the complete man. In addition, on another level, the number six is that of male twins, seven that of mixed twins (and the hermaphrodite), and eight that of female twins. The body of the newborn child is gently tapped
[844] by the number of strokes representing the above figures in order to call the child's ni according to its sex.

•714 827 The ni, which animates the body, is visible during the weeks following birth in the movements of the fontanel. It is also the breath, the respiration, the beating of the arteries. Like the dya, it is not indissolubly bound to the body for it leaves it during sleep in order to go to the sixth sky, sunankaba. When the person awakens, the ni returns [828] to the body and the dream is considered a memory of what it has seen, a premonition of an event concerning the individual, the family, or the village (1).

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1. Great numbers of fish seen in a dream foretell an abundant catch; quarrelling signifies war; to swim suggests purification for an offense. The passage of crickets from west to east is the sign of a great battle or famine. In this last instance, the situation is so serious that the village is forewarned and each one must make an offering to a needy person saying these words: "I make this soul sacrifice to God in order that he save me (nye nin ye ni sakaka ye ka ngala ma a la ka mbo)." The village chief also offers a collective sacrifice.

714 The dya, the double or twin of the human being and its opposite sex, has a body: either the shadow on the ground or the image in the water. It may move alone or be forced to leave the person it is accompanying under Faro's order. When a crocodile carries off or wounds a man by order of the spirit, he first seizes his visible shadow on the surface of the water and his dya in the water. The same thing may be attempted by someone with evil intentions. In such a case the close contact which the dya as a shadow maintains with the impure earth makes it particularly vulnerable. In order to remedy this, the person concerned must look at himself in the water contained in a gourd; then, when his image is clear, he clouds it by tipping the receptacle; this puts the dya under Faro's protection.

/60/ The independence and vulnerability of the dya require, in the course of certain religious functions, that it be taken over by Faro for the duration of the ceremony.

Wild and domestic animals are endowed with a ni and a dya. Plants also have a ni. The ni of trees is situated in the buds and insures its growth and its life; that of cereals necessary to human life

774 is the object of constant concern during agrarian rituals. The role of the soul of plants is particularly noticeable in their medicinal uses. Drawing a remedy from a plant may cause its death, liberating its spiritual principles for the benefit of the sick man. Because of this, such an act is equated with a blood sacrifice.

With the exception of the ngovo tomato, plants have no dya. The shadow (suma) of a plant is not independent like that of a man or an animal. It exists only through light effects and its movements are caused by the air and the wind moving its leaves and branches. This is what the Bambara means when he says that the dya has a life of its own and depends on Faro, whereas the plant's suma depends on the spirit Téliko, master of the air.

774 787 804 843 An individual's dya can be known and his temperament and life possibilities assessed by measuring his shadow on the earth at noon. The unit employed is the little finger, which is a corporeal symbol of the person. If a pregnant woman is thus measured, the sex of the child may be predicted.

774 [576] When a boy or a girl gets married, it is said of them: a ye a dya furu: "he (or she) has married his dya." For it is impolite to say that a person married anyone but his spiritual double. Besides, the union of the couple is repeated by the union of their dya which like themselves are of opposite sex. In olden times, male twins married the [595 851] same woman and the latter's dya was taken over by Faro in the Niger. The child she conceived was the son of both husbands.

589 791 Some men do not marry. This is true of the Soma, the religious diviner attached to the major Bambara societies. Initiated in the course of a solitary sojourn in the bush, he left his dya with the invisible spirits. This is a prerequisite to the gift of double sight with which he is endowed as well as a protection against possible dangers to the dya when it remains in contact with the earth, or when it approaches other humans. The true spouse of the Soma is his dya: he may mate only with it on a fixed date when the spirits return it to him for this purpose. /61/

The tere

774 The tere was inflicted by Pemba on Mousso Koroni in order to diminish her power at the time he was pursuing her. This explains its complexity: it is at once the character of a man, his strength,

774 his consciousness, as well as that part of his being which, through the body, makes him sensitive to events. If man is vulnerable through his double, it is his tere that is affected by any breaking of taboos; it receives and submits to impurity.

[826] The tere has its seat in the blood and the head (kun tere). It develops in the foetus in the course of gestation and is composed in part of the parents' tere to which is added that of the deceased person whose soul and double the child has inherited.

774 The appearance of the child's tere is determined by the old men
553 of the family in the course of the name-giving ceremony which takes
787 place publicly on the eighth day after birth. After carefully examining the child's hairline along the forehead, the manner in which his eyebrows join, the shape of his eyes (the seat of intelligence), mouth, hands, and feet, one of the old men present announces in a loud voice the revealing signs of his character. The position of these signs makes it possible to say whether a child has a good or a bad tere and to make predictions about his life. A slight bald spot on the middle of his head will make him a rich man; a wide and deep skull will make him a chief. The old man then swings the child in the direction of the four cardinal points above the family altars and gives him the first name of the deceased person whose ni and dya he has inherited. Some of the hair, shaved off shortly before, is then thrown into the Niger by the father who pronounces the name while facing the river. The gesture and the word are meant to entrust the tere to the spirit of the waters and to ask his protection. On the same day the blacksmith marks out on the child's face the scarifications that act on his tere, giving him strength, courage, and virtue.

774 As the child grows, certain of his physical peculiarities are inter-
787 preted as characteristics of his tere. If he grinds his teeth while
828 sleeping it means he will attack his parents; if he often takes hold of his left wrist with his right hand he will always be victorious. A girl who walks swinging her hands and throwing them behind and who raises dust with her feet while walking will destroy her husband's fortune. Some informants say that a person has several tere: /62/ one for his manner of walking, one for the way he carries his head, one for the shape of his limbs, and one for the breasts if the person is a woman (1).

1. The physical signs determining the tere are very numerous. On this subject see

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D. Traore. "Le Tere chez les Bambara du Ségou /The Tere among the Bambara of Ségou/," Notes africaines, January 1947, pp. 29-31.

774 Man is considered the bearer of a strong tére. Because he talks, is well informed, and knows good from evil, he is responsible for his own life and that of his family. The tere is the gaining of consciousness.

774 This aspect of the tere means that only domestic animals, whose life depends on man, are bearers of this principle. Wild animals 825 "have a hard and barren life; they have to labor to feed themselves; so they do not have to bear the burden of a tere." All that lives independently of man is without a tere. (1)

1. However, according to certain informants, wild animals might also be endowed with several tere for different parts of the body. In this case, it would seem that the term designates especially the animal's physical peculiarities and not its consciousness, as in the case of man and domestic animals.

The tere of domestic animals is not as powerful as that of man, but is also revealed by external signs. For instance, a horse that swings its head from right to left while it is tied up has a very bad tere; it is said to be its duga fufa (2). Such a beast is undesirable in

2. Literally, "the swaying of the hawk." It is said that when a hawk descends on its prey, it swings its head right and left in order to see the prey better.

a home for it "chases away happiness and success." A wounded domestic animal attacks its enemy with its tere.

774 The fact that the tere is that part of the person which suffers the 784 consequences of impurity testifies to the bonds that unite man to the outer world. The tere is disturbed when a taboo, tne, is broken. If 827 it is a good tere, it leaves the person; if it is a bad one, it becomes worse. On the other hand, the brezking of a taboo provokes a physiological change in the blood which loses its red color and becomes

774 784 827 pale. It is manifested by a loss of strength and by illnesses affecting the body openings: the man becomes blind and deaf-mute. He may also become paralyzed. Generally he does not die but is pursued by ills until he purifies himself.

774 In addition, the tere changes when it is detached from its normal support; it then becomes nyama, a force which acts outside the body. Manifest in action, the fact can already be sensed in the spoken word, the bearer of nyama which immediately affects /63/ the person to whom it is addressed. The consequences of this action of the word are manifold.

761 774 778 At the time of death, the tere is completely liberated. Transformed into nyama which leaves the body, it then becomes a very active form which, in certain cases, can attack whomever it considers responsible for the death (1).

1. This very visible but incomplete aspect of the nyama is the one that has been most studied heretofore. On this subject, see the works of the Abbé Henry, Ch. Monteil, H. Labouret, L. Tauxier. Furthermore, in the sky, in space, and on earth, there is a nyama independent of the tere. The nature of this general and vital element has not been completely clarified by investigation.

774 778 Sacrificial beings, men or animals, or plants for ritual use never release a dangerous nyama. Their spiritual principles and forces are channeled in the course of the ritual and directed toward the benefit of a supernatural power through the altar. The same is true of domestic animals immolated for consumption, in which case their forces are used over again and their death causes no disorder since it was foreseen by Faro's law concerning food.

On the other hand, the nyama of the bush animals (nyama bakâ) leave their dead bodies and pursue the hunter (2). To protect himself

2. The sick man may be treated in the following manner: seven (or a multiple of seven) cowrie shells are thrown upon the hide of the animal

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as an offering, which implies an apology with the understanding that the guilty man is given as many blows as there are cowrie shells offered. Next, the hide is soaked in water and washed. It is then secured so that it may not once again run away into the bush. These various operations are performed as often as necessary and until the crisis is over. On the other hand, this purification may be performed as often as necessary, but cannot be renewed in the case of a broken taboo.

the hunter carries an altar, dɔzoboli, suspended from his shoulder. Into it the animal's strength is channeled the moment it dies.

Every individual is, therefore, constantly faced during his lifetime with this active force which is liberated by the word, by certain acts, and by death. He must be in a position to fend off danger, to maintain his own tere which will help him if it is good, but which may on the contrary join the enemy forces and help them in their destruction if it is evil. Therefore, in the latter case the individual tries to change it by seeking the assistance and advice of the Komo diviner. But whatever happens, each individual, whether he wishes it or not, endures the attacks and the presence of numerous and varied nyama, because he has destroyed plants, trodden on insects, and wounded other living beings. Thus, he is at all times the bearer of displaced life forces that are foreign to him. Moreover, these forces find their way /64/ through him to all that he touches. He becomes a center of influences which first exert their action on his person and which he must take into account to maintain his integrity (1).

1. Although this feeling is very distinct in the mind of the Bambara, it does not make him inactive. The responsibility is only serious in the case of a voluntary act of useless destruction. In all other cases, the rites counteract the inconveniences. The Bambara are responsible, but free.

826 is also through the feet that a part of man's strength is deposited in the sweepings and rubbish upon which he treads. Their role as receptacles appears in the rituals concerning household refuse and the dirt on roads and paths.

Like the little finger, the small toe symbolizes the whole person. [301] It is sometimes adorned with a silver ring, symbol of the word, which recalls that man's body is the seat of the word extended within him from head to feet (1).

1. In olden times the ring on the small toe was made of red nyama fiber (nyama fu), which played the same role as metal.

831 The notion of the bisexuality of human beings is fundamental;
826 the spiritual principles are sexed like the body, whose ambivalence /71/ is evident during childhood: the boy is feminine in his foreskin; the girl is masculine in her clitoris. One of the aims of circumcision [304] and excision is to help the child attain the sex to which it is apparently destined by removing the organ of the opposite sex. (2). But the

[171] 2. The same conception is found among the Dogon; see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 185.

initial duality of the soul and body is the very foundation of the human being. He is complete only if he originally received it, and he retains it even after the operation imposed by physical and social life, [774] for the soul of the opposite sex, though diminished in the body, remains present in the shadow, the dya. He also rediscovers his dual unity when he marries. A married couple are a unit for their dya [581] join as do their bodies in an act which is not merely physical and which realizes the ideal union of twins.

831 The sex to which one belongs dominates one's whole existence on
801 earth. Objects and tools bear masculine or feminine marks, according to the rules of the division of labor. The numbers three (man) and four (woman) are abridged forms of the sex. "Primitive men" who, according to the Bambara expressed themselves mostly by gestures and signs, engraved their rare objects with the number of

564 Every blacksmith is regarded as the holder of an excellent tere.
326 He is well-intentioned, affable, and never hurts anyone. It is easy
774 to make friends with him, to joke with him, even if one knows him
but a short time. The senankuya relationships which he has with other
Blacks also contribute to the cordiality of these ties.

[304] The good tere of the blacksmith is brought into play particularly at circumcision which is preferably entrusted to a Gwonna. Being circumcised by a blacksmith causes the wanzo to diminish rapidly, hastens the healing, and improves the tere. A blacksmith is reputed to have the power of transforming himself at will into an animal or a plant. In those places where hyenas are venerated as the animal
[825] protectors of a village (dasiri), they are always considered as the blacksmith's ancestors who have undergone metamorphosis. (1).

1. Particularly in the village of Konodimi, situated 21 km. to the southwest of Ségou.

773 The ritual paraphernalia now preserved in each village comprise
564 models of all the tools manufactured by the blacksmiths since their
326 first appearance.
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a. Wooden tools The craftsmen first used wood, gradually changing the shape of the objects. From a simple stick /116/ (generally in sunzun) (2) or from a rough-hewn block, they gradually made more

2. Diospyros mespiliformis. The wood of this tree is very hard.

perfect tools, obtaining the shape desired by rubbing and polishing on rocks.

773 The first weapon used in hunting was a throwing instrument in the
564 shape of a boar-spear, the semenkala (from kala, handle, Fig. 9, A).
326 Hewn from one piece, it comprised three distinct parts: (1) the
411 bulonda; (2) the semenu; and (3) the koli (literally, hook). Men threw the object with all their strength at the pursued animal or else they dug into the earth where their prey was hiding with the pointed end (semena) which was often poisoned with a viper's venom. The weapon was the object of blood sacrifices carried out on the koli and destined to increase its strength.

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778 B. Altars of the Komo

The boli altars occupy a distinguished place in the religious and mythological representations of the society organized around them. On the one hand they are a capsule of the universe because of their composition; on the other they are a capsule of the society as all its members are present in them. In fact, each member has provided a part of the composing elements after having impregnated them with his person by salivating over them while pronouncing his name.

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346 The altars of the Komo are kept in a sanctuary, the komo so (literally, house of the Komo), a medium sized hut built either in the chief's dwelling place, or in the bush at some distance from the village. The approach to this structure which is under Faro's protection is forbidden to the ordinary person. The chief himself never enters alone. It is said that a snake, the soul and guardian of the sanctuary, is born and lives at the top of the hut in the branches which form the roof (Pl. VI, a).

The hut is divided into a number of floors on each of which is placed /146/ an altar. The highest one contains at its center the nimara boli (literally, altar of the souls) which, as its name indicates, is the container of the souls belonging to deceased members of the society and to sacrificed animals (1). It contains, from top to bottom,

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782] 1. There is constant preoccupation with preserving all vital elements. The souls of sacrificed animals are the object of the same care as those of humans. Like them, they participate in the resurrection promised to everything which has lived.

hair of the dead, copper for the souls of animals, gold for those of men. These various ingredients, placed in a double sac, receive the sacrificial blood which runs between the two layers and soaks them.

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778 The nimara boli is surrounded by small individual altars which have served to channel the souls of the dying and lead them to the common receptacle (2). These small boli remain in the hut only

2. See p. 175.

[119] Chapter 2

Concepts

1. Beliefs

195 826 The Bambara, like ourselves, has a sense of inner life and he expresses it in his language through figurative expressions which, in a sense, localize his sensations.

The eye, whose lens reflects everything that goes on around us, is, for the Bambara, a kind of mirror of the inner life: to be sad, nye na-fin, means "to have a somber eye"; to be cheerful, nye na-dye, means "to have a bright eye"; to be beaten down, nye na-koro, means "to have an eye that is old."

The head is the seat of decision, will and pride. To be active, kun' kene, is "to have an ardent head"; to be tenacious, kun' gwele, is "to have a hard head."

All emotional life is concentrated in the heart. A man who has proper feelings, a son' ka nyi, "has a good heart"; one who is bad, a son' ka dyugu, "has an evil heart." In a more general sense, anything that acts within (kono) us is a be n-kono, literally "it is within myself," meaning "I think, I intend, etc."

It is noteworthy that for these people life resides especially in two organs, the heart and the liver. The most solemn oath among them always contains the phrase: i ka n son' ni m bien' ta or "take my heart and my liver," that is, "destroy me, annihilate me, by removing these two knots of life."

774 195 In addition to these figurative expressions, which are common to [120] all languages, there are abstract terms which serve to express all that we imply in the words "life," "soul," etc. In Bambara, ni is "physical life," characterized by the drawing of breath (ni), which begins and ends with life. Dusu is emotional or moral life; si is duration, in the sense of living and also of becoming.

774 The Bambara does not conceive of a body's shadow as being caused by the interception of light by that body. For him

774 it is a fluid emanated from the body itself and made manifest as much by the shadow, which may be seen in sunlight or in a bright light, as by the image which appears when the body is placed in front of a reflecting surface. This fluid is called dya.

774 787 The dya has the faculty of leaving the body when it is asleep to wander wherever it wishes; the sight of its wanderings, which the body can witness, constitutes a dream (sugo). Dream is a kind of reality; it is in a sense the private life of the dya in company with its fellow-dya. During waking hours, the dya accompanies the actions of the body; during sleep, the body must endure the dya's peregrinations, for there is no doubt but that the dya rules the body it inhabits. Thus, waking a person abruptly is virtually a criminal act because, if the dya is away [761] at the time, a too abrupt summons may break the link between the dya and the body, and such a rupture (sa) is death (sa). Besides, the body has only a vague memory of the wanderings of its dya, it experiences the consequences of this action. On awaking, the body is exhausted by all these mad rushing about and fantastic escapades, and it feels the effects of the dya's actions, either good or bad.

In short, this dya is comparable to what some Europeans call a "double."

775 Further, it appears that the dya plays a crucial role in the "return" (sagi) to life, that is, rebirth, which is one of the most strongly held beliefs of the Bambara. After death, the dya is reincarnated in the same families; the Bambara even claim to have positive proof of this fact. Such and such a newborn child has such and such anatomical peculiarity of the deceased -- is this not a proof that the deceased wanted to show thereby that he was re-embodied? If a child dies very young, the body is mutilated in some agreed manner -- a finger is broken, for instance -- [121] and if later a child is born in the family with a similar deformity, everyone is convinced that the dead child has "returned": a sagira, "he has returned."

It is also believed possible for a dead person to be reincarnated far from his own people. All over Bambara country stories are retold of dead people who, more or less long after

775 their death and more or less far away from the place where they died, have been seen living a new life.

774 The dya is then, as it were, the essence of individuality, and the body, its material expression, takes on forms that are 775 somehow characteristic of the dya.

The dya is a fluid which has its own attributes. There are sorcerers who are thought to know ways to capture the dya, especially for the purpose of using it to make idols that can talk.

It is further believed that a part of the dya is indestructible because it is made up of another fluid common to all nature, which the Bambara call nyama.

The nyama has no shape, but it retains, as it were, a trace of the identity it had during its incarnation; so the name borne by the person who was animated by this nyama has an irresistible attraction for the nyama and the latter is forced to obey anyone who knows how to use this propensity to make it carry out his wishes. After death, the nyama retains human contacts and, in certain respects, continues to behave as it did during its corporeal lifetime. Its manifestations are seen by the Bambara in matters of vengeance: the nyama of an ancestor is especially attentive to the manner in which the ancestor's wishes are being carried out and it is relentless in punishing those who fail to comply. It is the nyama of the fa (father of a family or patriarch) who torments the accursed; it is the nyama of the victim who pursues the murderer; and it is the nyama of anything tabooed that strikes down the impious.

So it is that, for the Bambara, a human being is composed of a corporeal body (su) which serves as the outward envelope (fure) of a fluid element (dya), whose subtle essence (nyama) is merely a part of the universal energy which permeates all nature.

771 [122] To a certain extent the Bambara applies the foregoing ideas on human beings to all that surrounds him. However, it should not be assumed from this that he conceives of everything as being made exactly in his own image. To express abstract ideas, he uses concrete terms which may, however, give a false impression. There is no doubt whatever that the Bambara differentiates between himself and animals; he also distinguishes from vegetables or minerals.

771 In any case, these are questions which he does not ask or which, at least, he has not considered in any way that would cause him to make logical, even if fragmentary, syntheses. His words and his acts are indications and sometimes even guide-posts for us, but how uncertain and misleading they can be! And, in the observation of current facts, how many at least seeming contradictions there are! However, in the main, the analysis given in the paragraphs above represents the basis of Bambara dogma, since everything happens in reality as if the Bambara were living in accordance with these principles.

761 That being the case, life results from the union of the two parts of the body, while death is a result of their separation.
772 Whence come these two elements and who it is that decides upon their union? No answer is possible. The Bambara say, merely, that certain persons are reincarnations. Precautions [844] taken during pregnancy and delivery show that childbirth is one of those mysteries against which taboos must be observed as a protection. The frequent and readily believed stories about [845] women giving birth to monsters -- usually animals -- bear witness to the affinities which, in the minds of the Bambara, exist between all creatures. But nothing specific is said about what precedes and determines the birth of a child.

562 This is a secret to which the Bambara are, of course,
778 not indifferent. It is evidenced in the fact that women, through whom man comes into the world, are held to be doubtful creatures, at the very least, partly because of menstruation, which makes a woman impure, and partly because of the mysterious travail she endures during the delivery of a child (1).

• [774]

1. Women are also susceptible of being possessed continuously by a spirit (see the story of the Déni-bo Ba, p. 123). That is why, when a woman is several times widowed, she is suspected of being possessed by a jealous spirit who kills off her husbands. She is often even thought to be herself a sorceress.

789 In connection with the brotherhoods, we shall see how magic has been organized [141] in the very heart of native society and we shall observe the stability and the repercussions of its work.

Magic

778 789 [774] Universal energy. There exist individuals who are subject to certain phenomena, as yet imperfectly known or explained, in which the human being is divided into two so that on occasion his immaterial self lives a life independent of his body in a sphere inaccessible to corporeal sense. Such a man then enters a milieu from which he brings back visions and sensations that he can only describe vaguely and frighteningly in his habitual language after he has returned to a normal waking state.

Among the Bambara, occurrences of this kind have been observed and good use has been made of them, especially in the brotherhoods. They constitute a confirmation of belief in the invisible world, as do dreams. And the Bambara sees many other indications -- which escape us -- of the existence of this extra-natural world which envelops everything and which he conceives as a force sometimes active and sometimes inert, diffused or personified. It is this energy which is, as it were, set in motion by a curse, by the extreme expression of envy called "evil eye," by luck or by misfortune. A chief's authority derives the essence of its strength from this activity. And it is the reason for honoring the dead.

This invisible force, instantly transmissible to the greatest distances, is present in all things; it exists everywhere, in everything and in everyone. It possesses or acquires a greater or lesser power in certain objects and in certain people for a stated period of time or for a temporary period. It can be beneficent or maleficent, or both in turn. The ordinary man who touches such objects or such persons will usually be struck dead or, at the least, gravely affected, as he would be if he touched a high-voltage electric current. For the initiate who knows the secret of this force and who knows how to use it, this

776 time; it is the noblest work, and one to which every member of the Bambara race must be subject. Faro is represented by a spiral, munu; the vibrating movements of the spiral are the same that animate the daily movements of the sun. These movements are materialized in a basket-work headdress, yugu, which has eight whorls and which formerly was reserved for kings. Faro's face is white, because he took it from the spirit of the air, Teliko, who was an albino. His ears are protected by two fins; his hands are of different sex; his tail is palmate, and his breast is of copper. Albinos and copper are the spirit's preferred sacrifices. All atmospheric manifestations denote his presence; his principal seat is the Niger River, but he has the gift of ubiquity and haunts all waters. Faro is accompanied by helpers, the most representative of whom is the bolokuruni, one-armed blacksmith of a black race. His air messenger is the swallow, who carries the
[824] fertilizing word. Certain plants are in permanent rapport with him: the Yayalẽ, the Ngoyõ (tomato), which is compared to blood. Thus, small fields of tomatoes reserved for the cult of Faro are cultivated in each village. All metals are reserved for Faro. The Bozo, born of Faro's first twins, enjoy a privileged position because they were not subject to the defilement caused by Mousso Koroni and can enter into direct communication with the spirit. In addition, they are the masters of the water.

776 The cult of Faro includes a whole series of taboos, such as the
784 black earth of the river which may not be used by the potters and
841 butter which may not be kept in water. But the principal taboo is menstrual blood, originally provoked by the disorders of Mousso Koroni.

B. Conception of Man

●774 The Bambara conceive man as a microcosm, a resumé of the
761 totality of beings and things. The principle of duality contained in the original creative thought is realized in man by his twin souls which compensate for the separation of the sexes. In man, Faro is represented by the ni (soul) and the dya (double). Pemba is represented by the téré (the character, force, and conscience) and the nyama (which is the téré when it leaves its corporeal support after
[826] death). Mousso Koroni is represented by the Wanzo (evil force with

[826] 774 761 its seat in the prepuce and the clitoris, necessitating circumcision and excision). The body is conceived as being the support of all spiritual forces; each part is distinctly known [84] for its particular role. The body, like the spiritual principles, is bisexual; the boy [304] is feminine in his prepuce, the girl masculine in her clitoris, and it [831] is only after circumcision and excision that the man and woman can unite and realize the original fruitful twinship. On the metaphysical plane, there is identity between man, "seed of the world," and the cereal seed; the basic nutriments that are made up of the eight principal cereals are represented symbolically in men's clavicles. 775 761 Finally, death separates all of these elements composing the person. The dya remains in the water where it will become the ni of the new-born in the family of the deceased; the ni is caught by the family head and transported to the altar where it will animate the dya of the new-born; the téré becomes nyama, a dangerous and vengeful force; it is deposited on the pembele, where it rejoins the ancestral forces. The body is buried and belongs to the termites. At birth, all the spiritual forces are transmitted again, whole, "refreshed," and purified. One being replaces another until the final resurrection.

C. Ritual, Sacrifice, and Cults

782 To appeal to and influence the spiritual forces, the Bambara use prayer, offerings, and sacrifices. Oral rites are used everywhere and at any time. "They pray to the sky, the cardinal points, the spirits; they sacrifice on stones, on the ground, on trees, by water holes, just as on altars sheltered in the sanctuaries or situated in public or private places. Every circumcized adult, father of a family, owner of a home and cultivatable land, is a sacrificer, a capacity [531] emphasized by the red spot which sometimes is an ornament of the walls of the principal room in the man's residence." (1)

1. G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

4. The dja

774 778 Here again is a word very difficult to translate into our French language. We use dja to translate the words "phantoms," "pictures," "photographs," "shadows," "that which is reflected by water or by a mirror"; but there are other meanings, and there is no question of shadows or images in the following sentences, for example: a dja tikéra, a dja oulila, misiou dja oulila. They mean: "he is afraid," "he is crazed," "the cows are crazed." In the eyes of the Bambara, the dja is not only the shadow, the image, or the outline of objects, it is also that which makes them manifest. It is a force, a power common to beings of all kinds, and even though it cannot be compared to a genie or a soul, they nevertheless think of it as a kind of being which they are unable to define but which has its own existence and can act of its own accord.

[791] 774 784 The gné-fla, whom I mentioned when speaking of the souba, are feared because they see the genii and our private thoughts, and also because they practice sympathetic magic, by taking possession of that which makes the shadows of persons and things. The Bambara is convinced that his dja can be taken, and when this occurs he henceforth no longer casts a shadow. Although, because of their fear of the Europeans and in some cases because they have long been in contact with them, the Bambara may readily pose before a camera, one can nevertheless say that, in general, they do not like to be photographed. Particularly the old people object and begin to resist /42/ as soon as they see a lens. They have the notion in their heads that their dja will escape from them to make an imprint on the plate and leave its form there, and that this form will comprise the portrait, thus placing a part of their being in the hands of the operator and themselves at his mercy. They fear lest, as a result, they lose their shadows and the ability to cast them, and thus become idiots. [828]

774 Even though the Bambara cannot explain their ideas on this subject, these closely resemble the theories of Mr. de Rochas, discussed by Monseigneur Méric in Volume II of his work, Imagination et Prodiges /Imagination and Marvels/ /Paris, 1905/. The dja is something similar to what English psychologists call a double and

774 the French a phantom. It may be regarded as a kind of fluid, having some degree of consciousness and capable of escaping from the animate or inanimate object to which it belongs, without becoming completely separated from it, and giving that object a shadow, bearing its external form and outline, as well as the imprint of the fear, sorrow, joy, and sadness which may be reflected on a person's face. A dja may also escape and separate and detach itself completely, but nevertheless retain the external form of the object which it left. When a dja leaves its object, it stays in the neighborhood or goes wandering far off, and the being that it has left sees this double or merely feels it, or may even be unconscious of its existence.

774 828 For the Bambara, a dream is not a product of the imagination; it is a reality. They say that while they are asleep their dja sometimes escape and wander far away, and there they actually see and chat with friends, attend real feasts on real drinking bouts. A person is not surprised to awaken after such a dream with a dry throat and an empty stomach, for what he saw, drank, and ate were the dja of things and people, nothing more tenuous or imponderable, and only his dja saw, drank, ate, and enjoyed himself.

787 A dream is quite a deceiver, and its external realization is unusual, but it does sometimes occur. Certain Negroes are famous because they know how to interpret dreams, a knowledge not available to everyone, or again because they know how to dream and prophesy /43/ the more or less immediate future. They have a booth which is fairly well patronized; people consulted them and bring them cowrie shells. There are even people who run and tell them about every interesting story they dream, and since these people take precautions afterward not to miss some predicted piece of luck or to avoid a misfortune that threatens, they are aided in the realization of their dreams without suspecting it, and these results constribute not a little toward fortifying their false beliefs. /44/